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SUBJECT: DCHOD IGSIZ ON AEGEAN, IRAQ AND BILATERAL RELATIONS

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Jeffrey for reason 1.4 (b, d)

Summary

11. (C) During the Ambassador's first formal call, Deputy Chief of Staff General Hasan Igsiz praised the current strength of the U.S. - Turkey military relationship, thanked the U.S. for sharing vital intelligence as Turkey fights PKK terrorists in Northern Iraq and took on board the Ambassador's points about maintaining calm in the Aegean. Igsiz was blunt about Turkey's dissatisfaction with NATO's decision to take the Greek side during Exercise Noble Archer in December and said he would raise the issue with SACEUR when General Craddock visited Ankara January 20. Igsiz said that Turkey was committed to developing relations with the Government of Iraq, but was disappointed that the Turkish delegation found the Iraqi side to be either unprepared or unwilling to engage during the January 15 security tri-partite meeting in Baghdad. During a separate meeting with DAS Matt Bryza, Igsiz raised many of the same issues, but also cautioned that passage by the U.S. Congress of a resolution recognizing the events in Anatolia of 1915 as genocide would destroy the good work done to build our relationship. End Summary.

Igsiz: U.S. Top Policy Priorities "Surround" Turkey

12. (C) Although they had already met on December 4 during the U.S. - Turkey High Level Defense Group (just days after the Ambassador's arrival in Turkey) and had been in touch on urgent issues since then, the Ambassador paid his first formal call on Deputy Chief of the Turkish General Staff (TGS) General Hasan Igsiz on January 16. ODC Chief Maj Gen Rosborg and Pol - Mil Counselor accompanied the Ambassador. On January 15, DAS Matthew Bryza met separately with DCHOD Igsiz. In both meetings, Igsiz sought to underscore Turkey's importance to U.S. goals in the region; in Iraq, Iran, the Caucasus and on energy security issues, U.S. top policy priorities "surround" Turkey.

Intel Sharing a Banner Success

13. (C) Both DAS Bryza and the Ambassador told Igsiz that the new Administration's national security team had deep understanding of Turkey's importance for our goals in the region. Igsiz said that the November 2007 decision by the President to share operational intelligence so that Turkey could more effectively combat PKK terrorism was responsible for the current very positive state of bilateral mil-mil relations. Turkey had taken great advantage of this intelligence; Northern Iraq was no longer a safe haven for PKK terrorists. The PKK was not in good shape, Igsiz told Bryza; the number of terrorists who surrender or are captured was usually around 100 each year, but this year that number

was more than 800.

Turkey Engaging with Baghdad

¶4. (C) Igsiz said that the situation in Northern Iraq required urgent attention; he urged DAS Bryza to understand that the PKK is not just a problem for Turkey; if the PKK problem is not "solved" by 2011, "half of Northern Iraq will belong to the PKK" shortly after U.S. forces depart. Both Bryza and the Ambassador called attention to the strong efforts by Turkish diplomats and military leaders to engage with Iraqi officials; Turkey's work to shape the future of Northern Iraq was essential. Igsiz acknowledged that the Government of Turkey needed to work harder, but expressed frustration at the lack of results from the January 15 meeting of the Security Tripartite in Baghdad. Maj Gen Erdal Ozturk (Deputy J3) had reported that it was his impression that the Iraqi side was not well prepared for the meeting. The Turkish side sought a concrete intelligence exchange, and provided a list of places where the PKK might be, but the Iraqi side seemed reluctant to engage.

¶5. (C) Igsiz said that he believed the Iraqi central government was no longer concerned about Turkey's having intelligence cells in Erbil and Suleymaniyah; he thought that these units should not be perceived as undercutting the central government's authority since senior-level discussions were taking place in Baghdad. He repeated both to DAS Bryza and to the Ambassador a frequent GOT complaint that despite Massoud Barzani's positive statements, "almost nothing has been done" by the KRG against PKK.

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UAV Support for Turkey's Actions in Northern Iraq

¶6. (C) Turning to Turkey's need to improve its own ability to combat the PKK, Igsiz noted the GOT formal request to acquire U.S. - produced Unmanned Air Vehicles (UAVs). The Ambassador said that while the policy decision had been taken to support Turkey's requests, the acquisition process was complex, and included Congressional approval, a security review and, since demand for UAVs was so high, production might take time. Maj Gen Rosborg reviewed U.S. offers for interim solutions, which Turkey had chosen not to pursue, to fill Turkey's gap in Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance capabilities. During his meeting with DAS Bryza, Igsiz asked that the USG reconsider its decision to reject the GOT request to laser-designate targets with the U.S. UAV now providing intelligence support to Turkish forces combating the PKK in Northern Iraq. (Note: This did not come up a day later with the Ambassador. End Note.)

Noble Archer and Turkish Overflights in the Aegean

¶7. (C) On Aegean issues, Igsiz underscored Turkey's deep disappointment by NATO's decision to use NATO assets to support Greece's position on whether an Aegean island was demilitarized. Igsiz recognized that it was a NATO, not USG, decision, but pointed out that everyone in Turkey knew that SACEUR is an American. These were issues that should be resolved bilaterally between Greece and Turkey, at the table, not by NATO. He said that nothing had changed as a result of this decision other than that the Greek side had become emboldened, had considered this action as a "victory" and now sought to take more steps.

¶8. (C) Igsiz rejected Greek claims that the number of Turkish "overflights and violations" had increased dramatically. The Ambassador acknowledged that, overall, it appeared that Igsiz was right: Turkish overflights in the Aegean had not increased. But Turkey's overflights of two islands in the Aegean inhabited by Greeks had increased

dramatically. He repeatedly urged Igsiz to consider whether these flights were in Turkey's interest. Igsiz pushed back: Why was this matter being raised by the U.S.? The U.S. had been careful to remain neutral on this issue in the past. The Ambassador said that while the U.S. had not taken a public position on their status, it would surely not be in Turkey's interest to force it to do so; continued overflights would force this outcome.

¶9. (C) Many of Turkey's claims about airspace in the Aegean had merit, the Ambassador said, but as these islands were inhabited, no one could understand Turkey's questions about these islands. Igsiz suggested that while the islands were now inhabited, perhaps the U.S. should investigate how long the current residents had lived there. If you check, he said, you will learn that before 1996 (when tensions flared over Imia/Kardak, a barren rock in the Aegean), "nobody lived there." The Ambassador rejected this argument and told Igsiz bluntly that Turkey should "find another way to express its dissatisfaction with Aegean issues."

Relations with Israel Strategic for Turkey

¶10. (C) On Israel's actions in Gaza, Igsiz said that the Turkish General Staff was worried about the high level of anti-Israeli feeling. From the military side, however, unless TGS received specific political direction, relations would not change. There was to have been a high-level meeting in February, but this had been postponed. Igsiz said that the government had not given the TGS any information about a possible Turkish component to a peacekeeping force in Gaza, but TGS would send a force if it was so directed.

Armenia: U.S. Resolution on Genocide Would Set Back Progress

¶11. (C) Igsiz told DAS Bryza that he was concerned about the effect a renewed effort to pass a resolution declaring the events of 1915 as genocide could have on the U.S. - Turkey relationship. Perhaps even more important, he added, such an action would serve no purpose, and would disrupt efforts for a solution. Igsiz believed that such a decision would not be in Turkey's, Armenia's nor in U.S. interest; it would only serve the interests of the Diaspora. "It has taken years for us to improve our relations; it would take only one sentence -- even only one word to damage them," Igsiz said. If there

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was a U.S. resolution recognizing the genocide, the chance to normalize relations between Turkey and Armenia would be gone for a generation. Bryza acknowledged the potential harm to the relationship, and said the best way to avert this outcome was through diplomacy with Armenia.

¶12. (U) DAS Bryza did not have an opportunity to review this telegram.

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Jeffrey